Course Embedded Reflection EDLD 5364 Teaching with Technology

**Self Assessment and Critical Reflection**

This week is the final week of class. I must admit that this has been a semi-tough class due to the team project. While Google Docs was a convenient tool for group collaboration, it was still tough to follow everything and make sense of the direction in which we were going due to all of the massive written dialogue. I think that it would have been better if we had incorporated the use of Skype or other tools to communicate and just used Google docs for including project input and completion. Anyway, my team was great! They were very understanding and cooperative and our team leader was good at pulling things together. We chose not to assign a part to each member but for each of us to contribute where we felt most comfortable and it all came together. I will use the various collaborative techniques, as with my group, in the future.

I appreciated the way the major group project was broken down part by part each week instead of it being assigned and being due at the end of the course. It gave me an opportunity to digest and learn more about each part of the assignment through all of it the readings and videos. The rubric for this assignment also helped my team and me to be successful. The web conferences, however, were not very useful to me, due to the quality of the audio and the massive questions/discussions that took place.

During EDLD 5364 Teaching with Technology, I learned about new technology tools that I can begin using in and for my class right away. Those tools were the Book Builder, UDL lesson Plan maker and checker, and rubistar from Pitler’s book (Pitler, 2007). I was glad that we were required to use the tools and was introduced to them otherwise; I might not have made the time to check them out or have even known about them to experiment with them.

Some of the information in this class focused on project learning or project based learning. This information brought back to light for me and helped me to rekindle the fire under me to attempt more project based learning. All of the video clips and readings on this approach just reminded me how this type of learning engages students, is meaningful, and helps prepare children for the real world work force. “Adopting a project-learning approach in your classroom or school can invigorate your curriculum with a real-world relevance and sparking students’ desire to explore, investigate, and understand their world” (Edutopia Staff, 2008). While I know students love projects in general, I have not done as many as I would like with my students. Therefore, I need to adjust my lesson plans so more of this type of learning can be done on a regular basis.

I learned more about the constructivist theory, connectivist theory, and the cyborg theory. The constructivist theory is one in which students construct their own knowledge, the connectivist theory is one in which the learners create connections between information, and the cyborg theory is described as interactions between humans and machines. Each theory plays a significant role in our world today.

With things ever-changing, teachers can't possibly know everything and being able to guide a child to think for themselves is a necessity. "If approached in a constructivist manner, the teacher’s job becomes one of facilitator or architect. Instead of telling students the answer, the teacher asks questions to help them discover the answer themselves" (Sprague, D. & Dede, C. 1999). Therefore, as the constructivist theory indicates, we must guide the students and allow them the freedom to construct their own knowledge.

I am pretty sure like myself; there are many teachers who were taught by the traditional or what I like to call “Old School “method. That is, the teacher is talking and the students are sitting in rows soaking up the knowledge. It’s hard to teach old dog new tricks or even to change the old dog’s habits and views. The constructivist classroom’s noise level can be loud, the students are in charge, and this is just contrary to the way I learned and the way I was taught to teach. “Students learn by taking information from the world and constructing their own meaning from the experiences as opposed to someone just telling them bits of information” (Sprague, D. & Dede, C. 1999). I wused to be that teacher who thought I could teach/tell the students everything they need to know and they would be successful if they just listened. However, I have been working toward more of a constructivist approach to teaching and learning.

Students can be allowed to set some goals for themselves and they are more than likely to stick to those goals to achieve success. Technology can be used to assist teachers and students set goals. "Technology enhances the goal setting process by providing organizational and communication tools that make it easier to clarify the learning objectives" (Pitler, 2007).

Well, I must admit that creating a UDL lesson was really time-consuming for me, but I see its usefulness. Creating a UDL lesson really forced me to consider the diverse learners and make accommodations for them. It made me think about the Universal Design for Lessons (UDL) which include the Recognition Network (what we see and hear), the Strategic Network (how we organize and express our ideas), and the Affective Network (are the students, excited, engaged, interested, challenged and understand why this learning is important). Planning this UDL lesson also allowed me the opportunity to practice the UDL Principles of creating varied ways for the learners to acquire knowledge, varied ways for them to demonstrate that knowledge, and varied ways to motivate all students. I really see the importance and necessity in this day and age of digital natives to implement the UDL Principles into each and every lesson. The UDL checker was not what I thought it was going to be but it helped me to assess my lesson to make sure that all UDL elements were present. Now I know and have experience with the tools that will help me create lessons and a non threatening check up tool to check those lessons, so that I can utilize them in my own classroom. The UDL lessons should reach all learners, have something special to offer each one, and leave no child behind. Once again, although my time is very limited, I can appreciate the requirement to create our own UDL lessons using <http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/> and check them using <http://udlselfcheck.cast.org/> !

Finally, I would use technology with instruction because technology tends to motivate students and thus increases student learning and achievement. Students are to be taught based on their varying levels and technology can help to more easily differentiate instruction for learners. However, as a lifelong learner, I learned that there are so many more things that I must learn in order to be a successful technology facilitator. With that said, I am willing to do the work and constantly learn about new technologies so that I can be the best technologist that I can be when I am finally given that opportunity. In the meantime, I will incorporate the things that I have learned into my classroom.

*Edutopia.org (2008). Why teach with project based learning?:Providing students with a well-rounded classroom experience. Retrieved on Feb. 28, 2008 from http://edutopia.org.*

*Pitler, H., Hubbell, E. Kuhn, M., & Malenoski, K. (2007). Using technology with classroom instruction that works. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Chapters 1, p 18.*

*Sprague, D. & Dede, C. (1999). If I teach this way, Am I doing my job: Constructivism in the classroom. Leading and Learning, 27(1). Retrieved February 24, 2011 from the International Society for Technology in Education at http://imet.csus.edu/imet9/280/docs/dede\_constructivisim.pdf.*